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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 27 May 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Miss MASON

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6) (continued)

Initial report of Bangladesh (continued) (CRC/C/3/Add.38, CRC/C/3/Add.49; CRC/C/Q/BAN.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Bangladesh resumed its place at the Committee table.

2. Mr. HUSAIN (Bangladesh) said that birth registration was important for the purposes of determining age of marriage and of entry into the workforce and age of criminal responsibility. A recommendation would be made to the Law Reform Commission to examine the possibility of raising the latter age from 7 to 12 years.

3. Section 82 of the Penal Code of Bangladesh totally absolved children under the age of 7 of criminal responsibility. Those between 7 and 12 were also absolved if they did not appreciate the consequences of their actions.

4. Birth registration was mandatory but, because of the level of illiteracy and the lack of accountability it was not currently enforced. It would in future be the responsibility of local government. The average age of marriage in Bangladesh had risen to 18. However, without a system of birth registration the relevant age could not be correctly determined.

5. Efforts were being made to set up more remand homes as part of the administration of juvenile justice. Police interrogations of children were conducted in the presence of magistrates. Children who were convicted were sent to rehabilitation centres where they received education and work training and they were kept separate from adult criminals.

6. With regard to family planning methods, he said that abortion was illegal in Bangladesh. It was replaced by the physiological process of menstrual regulation involving a short surgical intervention. Such regulation was an accepted method of family planning and was carried out in clinics under the supervision of a competent surgeon.

7. Referring to the question asked concerning divorce, he said that marriage in Bangladesh was a civil contract. All marriages had to be registered and infractions of that rule were punished. Divorcees and widows had the right to remarry after a period of 90 days and Islamic law imposed no constraint on a woman who wished to remarry. In cases of conflict with religious or personal law, the common law took precedence. Polygamy was strictly prohibited in Bangladesh. A husband could remarry only with the written consent of his first wife, usually in cases where he had no children from his first marriage.

8. Children whose parents divorced did not enjoy equal status. In the case of dissolution of a marriage, a boy was kept by his mother until the age of 7 and a girl was looked after until she reached puberty. Emphasis was placed

first and foremost on the welfare of the children. Custody of a child was usually determined on that basis. In cases which were not referred to courts, the laws in force applied.

9. With regard to the sharing of responsibilities in marriage, he pointed out that Bangladesh was a male-dominated society. However, a transformation was in progress since, under the fifth Five-Year Plan, the value of work performed by women in the home would now be quantified. Most domestic activities had previously not been evaluated in monetary terms. Account also had to be taken of other work performed by women in rural areas.

10. The Government attached particular importance to birth registration and considered the family to be the fundamental unit of society.

11. The Ministry of Social Welfare looked after the well-being of orphans and of disadvantaged and disabled children by providing orphanages, technical training centres and rehabilitation facilities, the latter especially for girl children who had been subjected to violence. The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs had opened centres to care for them under a multisectoral programme. Training facilities would be established to counter violence against women and trafficking in children.

12. The issue of children in the Chittagong Hill Tracts was a very sensitive one. The area had previously been administered by tribal chiefs. However, following the introduction of a national integration policy and a series of meetings with the tribal chiefs, it had been placed under the authority of autonomous development boards. The Government merely made budgetary allocations and received financial statements of expenditure at the end of each year. In general, the children in that area enjoyed the same treatment as those elsewhere and were not subjected to any discrimination.

13. With reference to the reservation entered by Bangladesh in respect of article 14, paragraph 1, of the Convention, he pointed out that children could seek guidance from adults but were free to make their own choices. The reservation should, however, be withdrawn, as in due course should the reservation in respect of article 21. Children born of marriages between citizens of Bangladesh and foreign nationals were entitled to Bangladesh citizenship.

14. The CHAIRPERSON asked the delegation for information on the attitude of males towards the implementation of the Convention, given that Bangladesh was largely a patriarchal society.

15. Mr. HUSAIN (Bangladesh) said that adult males in Bangladesh took a paternalistic and proprietary view of children's rights. The current law and order situation did not allow girls to go out unaccompanied. Each year the Bangladesh Children's Academy encouraged children to formulate a charter of demands which was passed to the Government on International Children's Day. Regular monitoring of the realization of the demands was conducted by the Prime Minister's Office. Further progress in that area was shown by the establishment of a Child Rights Forum and the involvement of many

non-governmental organizations in children's education, skill development and rehabilitation. Unfortunately, there was as yet no sense of responsibility for sending children to school. Societal attitudes had a long way to go and were largely dependent on the success of the national awareness-raising programme. A project to promote women and children's rights had been launched with the assistance of UNICEF. In rural areas consultations were held with primary school teachers and local imams with the aim of sensitizing public opinion.

16. Ms. SARDENBERG said that it was essential for Bangladesh to incorporate the four fundamental principles of the Convention, not only in its national legislation, but also in its national policy for children, which at present addressed only those under the age of 14. The following problems should be highlighted: the situation of girl children, including the problem of their safety; inheritance law; children born out of wedlock; disabled children; and children from indigenous minorities who suffered as a result of social and economic marginalization, discrimination and lack of access to education.

17. The information that the age of criminal responsibility was being raised to 12 years was to be welcomed. However, that age was still very low and further progress must be made. There were also problems in connection with the age of marriage, birth registration and degrading treatment of children. Bangladesh should consider ratifying the Convention against Torture.

18. In relation to special protection measures, concern had been expressed regarding the situation of children in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Sporadic clashes were still taking place in that region, and government and local leaders should pay attention to the vulnerability of children in such situations of armed conflict. It was also necessary to highlight the situation of children in conflict with the law, those forced to resort to prostitution and child labour, refugees and street children. In relation to juvenile justice, major problems existed with the continuing imposition of the death penalty, allegations of child torture, the detention of children together with adults and the shocking examples witnessed of children's heavy sentencing for offences committed. It would be desirable in her view to give a clear definition of what was meant by "uncontrollable children".

19. Ms. KARP said that the Government of Bangladesh should consider prohibiting the use of corporal punishment in the educational system and in institutions where children were detained. It would be useful to know whether encouragement was given to a change in public attitudes in relation to the use of corporal punishment in the family environment. Further information was also needed on the strategies adopted to enhance the general principle of participation. A conflict appeared to exist between the view of children as adults, which meant that they did not need to be protected, and that which saw them as being allowed to express their opinion. How were children made visible in terms of their participation in family and public life?

20. She was concerned at the tendency to view the child from a very early age as a wage-earner for the family. States parties had an obligation under the Convention to pursue an economic policy that released children from wage-earning responsibilities.

21. She suggested that the Government should consider introducing a programme of assistance for abandoned women whose circumstances, including fear of stigmatization, prevented them from suing for maintenance. The State could either assume authority to sue the father of the child or pay the women some form of maintenance from public funds. It was an approach that had already been tried in a number of countries.

22. She suggested that the payment of allowances for large families might encourage parents to register their children at birth.

23. As adoption was illegal in Bangladesh, abandoned children were deprived of a family environment and committed in most cases to institutions. She suggested the introduction of a system of kafalah or foster placement. Article 21 of the Convention stressed that the best interests of the child should be paramount when alternatives to the family environment were being considered. The main point in inter-country adoption was not to preserve the nation's dignity but to ensure that the prospective adoptive parents were suitable and reliable and that they were not involved in exploitation or trafficking. She trusted that a variety of family-like alternatives for abandoned children would be examined during the law reform process.

24. Was it true that sports were not encouraged in schools and that there was a shortage of safe playgrounds?

25. As there were insufficient special schools to accommodate all disabled children, she asked whether there were plans to provide facilities for such children in regular schools.

26. Were there any figures for the number of children involved in accidents and any policies aimed at preventing the occurrence of such accidents?

27. She understood that there were no special rehabilitation centres for children with drug addiction problems and that adult centres were reluctant to admit children. How did the authorities plan to address that problem?

28. Juvenile justice should be given top priority in the reform process. She noted in particular that there was no special protection in Bangladesh for young people between the ages of 16 and 18. The child's right to freedom was violated by the vagrancy laws and by action on parents' complaints regarding "uncontrollable" children. The child should be offered some form of self-defence or representation to prevent incarceration on such vague grounds.

29. Trafficking in children was an appalling problem that called for intensive national and international action to apprehend the culprits. In particular, preventive measures at border checkpoints must be strengthened.

30. The fact that sexual abuse within the family and incest were taboo subjects and that the victim ran the risk of being stigmatized created a vicious circle. As there were no complaints, society decided that the problem did not exist and no provision was made to deal with its consequences. She welcomed the first steps that had been taken in Bangladesh to provide facilities for rehabilitation, although she was unsure whether the existence of incest as opposed to other abuses had been acknowledged. Public debate on

the issue should be encouraged as a means of countering the phenomenon and promoting law enforcement. The arrangements for evidence-taking should not be an additional source of trauma for child victims.

31. Mr. FULCI asked what proportion of the senior staff in the Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs were women.

32. The 1997 State of the World's Children report published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had commended the Grameen Bank initiative, which provided credit at low interest rates to poor families in Bangladesh, alleviating the chronic indebtedness that was a key factor in child and bonded labour. Over 90 per cent of the beneficiaries were women. What role had the Government of Bangladesh played in promoting the programme and how did it assess the results? Could it be used as a model for future programmes and for other countries?

33. In 1993 many thousands of young boys employed in the garment industry had been summarily dismissed in anticipation of foreign legislation banning the import of goods manufactured by means of child labour. Many of those boys had become street children. In July 1995, a Memorandum of Understanding had been signed between the garment manufacturers, UNICEF and the International Labour Organization (ILO) under which children were not to be dismissed until education programmes were ready to receive them. The children received a monthly wage while attending school. What role had the Government played in negotiating the Memorandum of Understanding? Could such initiatives be adopted as models for future programmes?

34. Bangladesh was one of the countries participating in the ILO International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour, and a Memorandum of Understanding had been signed with ILO on the implementation of a plan of action. Participants were required to generate awareness of the dangers of child labour, especially hazardous labour. Was the Government satisfied with progress under the Programme?

35. By all accounts, child prostitution was a widespread phenomenon in Bangladesh. While those found guilty of forcing a child to engage in prostitution were liable to a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, procurers were rarely prosecuted. There was also extensive trafficking of children with foreign countries, mainly for prostitution and labour servitude. He was disappointed that only one paragraph had been devoted to such a crucial problem in the report (CRC/C/3/Add.38, para. 152) and urged the Bangladesh authorities to take more resolute action to stamp out such practices and to promote awareness of the dangers involved.

36. Ms. PALME urged the Government of Bangladesh to ratify the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption and to look into the possibility of introducing facilities comparable to adoption within the country.

37. Bangladesh had sent a delegation to the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Stockholm in 1996, which had adopted a Declaration and Agenda for Action containing practical advice.

Had the Government established a follow-up mechanism to implement the proposed strategies to combat international and domestic commercial sexual exploitation of children and such contributory factors as abuse in the home?

38. The age of criminal responsibility was to be raised in Bangladesh from 7 to 12 years, but that age was still unacceptably low in terms of the requirements of the Convention.

39. She had not received an answer to her question regarding legal assistance for children deprived of their liberty. A UNICEF film viewed by the Committee the previous day had shown a defenceless young Bangladeshi girl who had been "rescued" from prostitution through incarceration for four years. In effect, she had been punished for being a victim.

40. Mrs. MOKHUANE, referring to the high rate of malnutrition and the high drop-out rate in primary education in Bangladesh, asked whether early childhood stimulation programmes existed and, if so, on what principles they were based. The drop-out phenomenon in the country had been attributed essentially to poverty. Were there any studies of the linkage between drop-out and a child's deficient cognitive abilities or learning problems due to malnutrition, low birth weight or injuries at birth?

41. She inquired about the availability of technical expertise for dealing with children's mental and emotional problems in the alternative care institutions of Bangladesh. No mention had been made in the report of the Government's mental health policy, especially for children in the 2 to 6 age group. Were there any programmes for early identification of children at risk?

42. High rates of prostitution and teenage pregnancy would normally be associated with an increase in sexually transmitted diseases. How many children were suffering from HIV/AIDS and were they allowed to attend school?

43. Mrs. MBOI welcomed the proposed change in the law to allow perpetrators of rape to be held responsible for the children fathered by their acts. The legal process should be child-friendly so that trauma was avoided.

44. She noted that when a husband was not present for registration of birth, the names of both parents were recorded. If the child was born out of wedlock, was that fact also recorded? If it was, she feared that the child would be discriminated against throughout his or her life and she urged the authorities to amend the law accordingly.

45. She recommended that a comprehensive study be made of the extent and nature of sexual exploitation and abuse, including incest, in Bangladesh, giving equal attention to boy and girl victims. The Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act prescribed penalties for forcing a girl under 18 years into prostitution. She hoped that boys would also be protected when the Act was reviewed. Lastly, she recommended a mass campaign against sexual exploitation and abuse and in favour of responsible sexual behaviour, especially by men.

46. Mr. RAFAH said that Bangladesh had the opportunity to bring about a legislative revolution by introducing reforms in children's rights that took into account the latest thinking in that area while preserving respect for traditional values.

47. Noting from the report that a 16-year-old could be sentenced to life imprisonment, he strongly urged that alternative penalties should be considered in such cases. As juveniles in conflict with the law generally came from poor families, they should have access to legal aid. He hoped that no criminal records were kept and that juvenile offenders could resume their lives with a clean slate on release.

48. What role was played by the media in publicizing the Convention?

49. Were there training programmes for persons such as judges, lawyers, social workers and police officers who were involved in the implementation of children's rights?

50. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking as a member of the Committee, drew attention to article 40 of the Convention, which stipulated that the juvenile justice system should treat children in a manner consistent with promotion of their sense of dignity and self-worth. Given the lack of clarity regarding the age of criminal responsibility in Bangladesh and the subjective manner in which courts determined age in the absence of a birth certificate, she feared that the death penalty could be imposed on a child. Noting that article 37 prohibited both the death penalty and life imprisonment for persons below 18 years of age, she asked what were the special circumstances in which a sentence of life imprisonment could be imposed in Bangladesh. What were the possibilities for rehabilitation, as required by article 39?

51. Reference was made in the supplementary report (CRC/C/3/Add.49, para. 39) to vagrant homes for the rehabilitation of children found living on the streets. She thought it degrading and undignified for an abandoned child to be termed a vagrant. The nomenclature should in her view be changed. The question of solitary confinement of children should perhaps be examined in the context of the penal reform currently under way in Bangladesh. Finally she asked whether there had been initiatives similar to the memorandum of understanding signed between the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers Exporters' Association, UNICEF, ILO and the Government of Bangladesh in other areas of manufacture.

The meeting was suspended at 11.35 a.m. and resumed at 11.55 a.m.

52. Mr. HUSAIN (Bangladesh), replying to the further questions asked by members of the Committee, said that the general thrust of their observations had been that the time had come for Bangladesh to take action. Its legislation, which allowed life imprisonment of children between the ages of 16 and 18, was in conflict with the Convention. He would be making a strong recommendation to the Law Reform Commission that the legislation should be harmonized with the provisions of the Convention. He would also make efforts to secure the elimination of corporal punishment in schools. In their training institute courses, teachers were being encouraged to abandon the practice.

53. Bangladesh had drawn up a multisectoral programme to combat and contain trafficking in children and the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, and to provide relevant training for the police, law officers and social workers. The subject was also well covered by the media. Despite a special law providing for the maximum penalty of death, trafficking in children had assumed alarming proportions. The proposed programme was currently being scrutinized by the Planning Commission, the central resource allocation agency of Bangladesh.

54. There was at present no programme for integrating disabled children into the mainstream system of education, nor was there any child stimulation programme for 2- to 6-year-olds. Both measures were under active consideration, however, and, as education and literacy spread, the situation would improve and disabled children would be integrated, empowered and freed of the stigma attached to them.

55. Agreements similar to that signed between the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers Exporters' Association, UNICEF, ILO and the Government of Bangladesh had been reached in respect of the shrimp industry and the car repair sector. Bangladesh had undertaken to eliminate the involvement of children in hazardous occupations; a programme was already in existence, but it should be expanded.

56. The term "vagrant home" had been inherited from the period of British rule and would be changed at the earliest opportunity. It certainly had unfortunate connotations.

57. Prostitution of the girl child was a punishable offence in Bangladesh. A centre in Dhaka was being transferred to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Social Welfare for use in the rehabilitation of girl children who had been involved in prostitution.

58. Suggestions made by members of the Committee on the subject of child labour, street children and juvenile justice would be referred to the Law Reform Commission.

59. A national action plan for the elimination of child labour by the year 2010 had been prepared by the Ministry of Labour and a national child labour policy was already in operation. Existing child labour laws were to be reviewed, updated and incorporated into a single text which would be translated into the Bengali language. Partnership and cooperation were to be ensured with the involvement of the relevant ministries, workers' organizations and international institutions. Emphasis was to be placed on the provision of formal education for children who were vulnerable to child labour, their access to educational facilities was to be improved, and the management of schools was to be made more flexible in order to ensure high-quality education. Non-formal education of a vocational nature would also be provided for such children. A favourable environment would be created for non-governmental organization and private sector initiatives. Career development and job placement measures would be expanded.

60. Intensive efforts would be made at all levels of the problem of child labour and there would be a national day for the elimination of child labour.

Existing laws would have to be amended, but above all they would have to be implemented decisively. The 1996 Labour Force Survey showed the various forms child labour took in Bangladesh. Practical information would be given to employers and local government bodies would be provided with the authority to monitor and protect working children; there would be collaborative activities with non-governmental organizations and the law enforcement agencies. The final stage - the elimination of child labour - would be accompanied by the availability of compulsory education up to the age of 14 years.

61. The delegation had been asked whether allowances would be paid to families so that they would not have to send their children out to work. Resources were to be mobilized to create employment for very low-income households headed by women. Emphasis was also to be placed on mobilizing resources in the rural sector to discourage migration to the towns. The strategies to be employed included raising awareness and disseminating information about child labour, rehabilitating working children, exploring the potential of community-based organizations at grass-roots level, educational and skill training for income generation, and support for families with credit facilities and training in credit management.

62. There had been a question about the Grameen Bank. Its current loan recovery rate was 98 per cent, which gave an indication of the total production which that type of microcredit operation tended to generate. The women in the 68,000 villages where Grameen Bank operated, most of whom had been deserted by their husbands, were clearly able to generate sufficient income to pay back their loans. However, Grameen Bank was not covering 100 per cent of the territory of Bangladesh so the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, the Ministry of Youth, the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Bangladesh Rural Development Board were conducting complementary microcredit operations at the grass-roots level, mostly involving women. They were modelled on those of Grameen Bank, but one difficulty was that the products being manufactured were of relatively low quality and were not surviving in competition because although the individuals concerned were given preferential access to microcredit they were not given preferential access to the market, which was not protected. The Bangladesh economy had been marketized, and not even fertilizers were subsidized. It was unrealistic to expect developing countries to achieve in 5 years what developed countries had achieved in 100 or 200 years; indeed, a recent report from the Asian Development Bank had concluded that in the Asia Pacific Region the theory of gradualism was preferable to the big bang theory. The intention in Bangladesh was to move gradually, but with appreciable speed.

63. Support centres that were being established for children and women offered counselling and medical facilities and provided for the rehabilitation of socially stigmatized groups and sex workers. With regard to trafficking in children, although Bangladesh had launched a series of projects to deal with the problem, the Committee also had a responsibility to complement that action by at the very least stating that trafficking in children required effective cooperation from Bangladesh's neighbours in the region.

64. Bangladesh had an integrated nutrition programme for children, but was rather backward when it came to measures to ensure the mental health of young children. There was, however, increasing awareness of the problem, although

even adults in Bangladesh did not usually have access to psychiatrists. There had so far been no reported case of AIDS among children. Trauma centres would be established in Bangladesh for the psychological rehabilitation of girl children and women who had suffered as a result of trafficking. They would be equipped like those in Malaysia, and would be operated with the benefit of experience gained not only in that country but also in the Philippines, Indonesia and India; technical and financial assistance would be forthcoming from a number of donors.

65. Bangladesh had one of the most successful family planning programmes in the world, with a contraceptive prevalence rate of almost 50 per cent. Some 45 per cent of eligible couples used permanent or semi-permanent methods of contraception. The intention was that within the next five years a contraceptive prevalence rate of at least 70 per cent would be achieved.

66. Finally, he said that Bangladesh would have to carry out a survey of abuse of all kinds in the home, but it would be difficult to undertake and would require considerable resources. He hoped that UNICEF would be able to help.

67. Mr. SIDDIQUE (Bangladesh) said that Bangladesh helped to meet legal aid expenses of children, as well as adults, who could not afford to go to court and were judged to be deserving.

68. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the delegation for the information it had provided concerning the Bangladesh national action plan for the elimination of child labour. She would be glad if a copy of the plan could be sent to the Committee.

69. Mr. FULCI said that the Government of Bangladesh should place greater emphasis on resolving the problems of child malnutrition, child labour and the sexual abuse of children. It should above all not permit itself to claim that it lacked the resources needed to undertake measures on behalf of children, or that its problems were regional rather than national.

70. Ms. OUEDRAGO encouraged Bangladesh to pursue the various programmes it had launched for the benefit of children. In the interest, however, of better promoting children's rights, and affording children better protection, she urged the Government to step up the pace of consultations and debates concerning Bangladesh's reservations to the Convention, with a view to their withdrawal; to harmonize its definitions of the child so as to align them with the provisions of the Convention; and to establish a central coordinating mechanism for all programmes undertaken on behalf of children. It should also take measures to eliminate discrimination against girls and women. Significantly, although men were elected to parliament by the general populace, women appeared to be elected by a different method, only a limited number of seats being reserved for them. Such statutory limitations did not contribute to the equality of women. Bangladesh should do its utmost to change societal attitudes and behaviour toward children and women.

71. She urged the Government of Bangladesh to establish birth registration, to strengthen programmes in the areas of education, literacy, training and

health care, to take measures to improve and purify the water supply, and to combat the traffic in children and the sexual abuse of children, especially in the home.

72. Ms. SARDENBERG thanked the delegation for its frankness, and for its self-critical attitude. Although the heritage of Bangladesh - its environment of economic hardship, its social and religious traditions, and its history of natural disasters - could not be overlooked, the report suggested that that country had recently achieved a degree of political stability and economic progress that should enable it to take measures to protect the rights of children. She noted that a gap existed between theory and practice; Bangladesh should make greater efforts to implement its plans and projects. It should also establish a mechanism for coordinating the efforts of the various government bodies concerned with the situation of children, with emphasis on statistical research. It should review and reform the juvenile justice system. Attention should be devoted to the problem of exploitation of children, especially girls. The Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women had urged that particular attention be paid to the problems of girl children.

73. Mrs. KARP associated herself with the views already expressed by other Committee members. She urged Bangladesh to fulfil the many commitments it had undertaken including, in particular, a comprehensive reform of the country's legal system and the establishment of a children's ombudsman. She encouraged the Government to accord particular attention to the implementation of article 18, paragraph 2, article 26 and article 27; to desist from considering children as responsible partners in the economic development of the country; to promote strategies for the elimination of child labour in both the formal and informal sectors; and to consider acceding to Convention No. 138 of the International Labour Organization (the Minimum Age Convention). The age of completion of compulsory education in Bangladesh was distressingly low; she had been pleased to learn that it would be raised to 14 years.

74. A country that condoned and tolerated the use of corporal punishment could scarcely be expected to protect children against other manifestations of violence. Nevertheless, she exhorted the Bangladesh Government to take appropriate measures to protect children from all forms of mental and physical violence, abuse and exploitation, and to protect the victims of abuse from blame and stigmatization. She also recommended the establishment of policies and programmes to develop a professional corps of social workers capable of promoting the rights and interests of all the country's children.

75. Bangladesh, a relatively young State, would do well to shed outmoded legislation dating from the time of British rule, and to create relevant new laws that conformed to Bangladesh culture and tradition.

76. Ms. PALME said that Mrs. Karp had voiced many of her concerns. She welcomed Bangladesh's plan of action to combat the commercial exploitation of children, which, if she understood correctly, encompassed the issues of traumatized children, the traffic in children, child prostitution, and child pornography. It was worth recalling that 20 per cent of children in Bangladesh never entered school, and that another 50 per cent never finished their fifth year of schooling. The dearth of education was a matter of

profound concern, and exacerbated the phenomenon of child labour as well as other forms of abuse. She hoped that attitudes and conditions would change for girl children, and, in particular, that domestic servitude would be eliminated.

77. Mr. KOLOSOV said that Bangladesh had fully implemented none of the articles of the Convention. With a view to beginning to achieve that goal, it should concentrate, firstly, on the elimination of poverty, and secondly, on reprioritizing the budget so as to allocate a greater portion of the national resources to children. Bangladesh must not expect international organizations to feed and clothe its 120 million inhabitants, but should instead ask such organizations to assist it in teaching and training not only children, but the whole population. Bangladesh was not, in his view, fulfilling the terms of article 4 of the Convention, which called on States parties to make use to the maximum extent of their available resources for the implementation of the Convention. Finally, Bangladesh should keep the Committee informed of the progress it was making in the directions he had indicated.

78. Mr. RABAH said that Bangladesh must resolve its economic difficulties if it was truly to achieve progress in the area of children's rights.

79. Ms. MOKHUANE thanked the delegation for its clear commitment to furthering the rights of children in Bangladesh. She recommended that the Government establish a policy for child-centred education, which should address the developing personality of the child as well as the matter of children with special needs, including gifted children. In addition, it should provide more information on environmental conditions, which directly affected the health of children; conduct research on the psychological health of young children with a view to building a child-development database; conduct research on societal attitudes toward children and women, with a view to re-educating men; take measures to promote gender equality at all levels of Government; and endeavour to strengthen the role of the family. It should also strive to create community-based mental health centres for children, and to reinsert institutionalized children into community life. Finally, Bangladesh should establish special protection measures for refugees, troubled minorities, and children in conflict with the law.

80. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee's conclusions and recommendations would be finalized and transmitted in writing to the Government of Bangladesh. She invited the delegation to present its concluding remarks.

81. Mr. HUSAIN (Bangladesh) said that his delegation had taken note of the Committee's observations and recommendations, and would transmit them to the Bangladesh Government. He would seek to ensure that the Convention was implemented as a whole, that notion was an interesting and inspiring one. He assured the Committee that Bangladesh would strive to eliminate malnutrition, child labour, the traffic in children, and the sexual abuse of children. It would endeavour to strengthen its health-care and education programmes and would hold consultations concerning that country's reservations to the Convention, with a view to their eventual withdrawal. It would endeavour to bring its definition of the child into line with the provisions of the Convention, to eliminate gender discrimination, to reform the inheritance laws

and the juvenile justice system, and to create a database in the area of child development. The suggestion that the age for completion of compulsory education should be raised to 14 years was an excellent one. Births, as well as marriages, should be registered.

82. He assured the Committee that the matter of imposition of life sentences and the death penalty on youths between the ages of 16 and 18 years would be brought before the Law Commission. Furthermore, he would see that the matter of the rights of the child was brought to the attention of the National Parliament, since it merited a commitment at the highest political level.

83. He wished to point out that women did participate directly in the election process in Bangladesh. There were currently some 37 women in the Parliament, among them the opposition leader and the Prime Minister.

84. Bangladesh remained committed to the implementation of the Convention, and would strive to give effect to all of the Committee's recommendations. The country was prepared to undergo major change but it would need the assistance of international organizations in doing so. Finally, he expressed the thanks of his Government for the reception of its delegation by the Committee.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.